EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Brendan J. Kennedy on 21 January 2009.

The application has been amended as follows:

Claim 32, line 15, "another" has been replaced with --a third--.

Claim 32, between lines 15 and 16, "or in the cavity" has been deleted.

Claim 32, line 16, "one of" has been deleted.

Claim 32, line 17, "first or" has been deleted and "structures" has been replaced with --structure--.

Claim 32, line 19, --orientation-- has been inserted between "first" and the semicolon.

Claim 32, line 24, "another" has been replaced with --third--.

Claim 32, line 24, --, the two central arms being symmetrical about an axis lying along an insertion direction of the projection into the cavity - - has been inserted after "structure".

Claim 32, line 27, "cooperative engagement structures" has been replaced with --the first and second engagement structures when in the first orientation and the second and third engagement structures when in the second orientation--.

Claims 33 and 34 have been canceled.

Claim 36, line 2, "34" has been replaced with --32-- and "another" has been replaced with --third--.

Claim 36, line 3, --respective-- has been inserted between "the" and "central".

Claim 36, line 4, --respective-- has been inserted between "the" and "central"

Claim 37 has been canceled.

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

For claim 1, Japanese Patent Document 2001-61514 (JP '514) discloses a safety buckle (A,B,C) comprises a socket (B), a first catch (75c), a plug (A), a first latch (32a), a second catch or latch (74a) and disengagement device (C). The socket has a cavity with a first surface (Figs. 1-37). The first catch in the cavity and adjoining the first surface end directed away from the first surface (Figs. 1-37). The plug has a central arm (30) inserted into the socket. The first latch is on the central arm sized and positioned to permit engagement with the first catch when the plug is inserted into the socket in a first

relative orientation to releasably retain the plug and socket together (Figs. 1-37). The second catch or second latch on an opposing side of the cavity or central arm, respectively, and sized and positioned with a symmetry to the first catch or first latch, respectively to permit an alternate engagement with the corresponding first catch or first latch (Figs. 1-37). The socket and the plug may be releasably retained together in a second relative orientation different from the first relative orientation (Figs. 1-37). One of the first or second latches on the central arm is free from engagement when the plug and socket are releasably retained together (Figs. 1-37). The disengagement device is on the socket or plug and operable to disengage one or more engagements involving the central arm (Figs. 1-37). JP '514 fails to disclose that the disengagement device is integral with the socket or plug and operable to displace the central arm. Although, Galbreath (US 6,138,330) teaches a safety buckle comprises a socket (13) and a plug (10) shaped to be cooperatively joined in a clasped condition (Figs. 1-6 and 14) where a latching mechanism (11a,11b,14a) is included in the socket (Figs. 1-6 and 14) with the latching mechanisms are arranged with functional symmetry to permit the buckle members to be joined and clasped with the latching mechanism in a plurality of orientations (Figs. 1-6 and 14), a blocking device (16c) protrudes from a first surface of a cavity of the socket and is provided between two members (11a,11b) of the latching mechanism to prevent disengagement of the latching mechanism (Figs. 1-6 and 14) and a disengagement device (20) is provided integral with the socket so that the user can pull the blocking device from between the two members (11a,11b) of the latching mechanism in order to allow disengage the latching mechanism (C. 5, L. 23-26 and

Figs. 1-6 and 14) and it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have a disengagement device being integral with one or more of the first and second buckle members as taught by Galbreath in the buckle of JP '514 such that the disengagement device is attached to the latching mechanism (75c) disclosed by JP '514, it would not have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have the disengagement device being operable to displace the central arm since JP '514 discloses that the buckle is disengaged by displacing the first catch provided in the socket and not by displacing the central arm.

As for Anscher, discloses a safety buckle (20,30 or 100 or 30,210) comprises a socket (30,1209), a first catch (37,129,130), a plug (20,110,210), a first latch (25,212), a second catch or latch (39,127,208,237) and disengagement device (31,126). The socket has a cavity with a first surface (Figs. 1-19e). The first catch in the cavity and adjoining the first surface end directed away from the first surface (Figs. 1-19e). The plug has a central arm (22,111,211,235) inserted into the socket. The first latch is on the central arm sized and positioned to permit engagement with the first catch when the plug is inserted into the socket in a first relative orientation to releasably retain the plug and socket together (Figs. 1-19e). The second catch or second latch on an opposing side of the cavity or central arm, respectively to permit an alternate engagement with the corresponding first catch or first latch (Figs. 1-19e). The socket and the plug may be releasably retained together in a second relative orientation different from the first relative orientation (Figs. 1-19e). One of the first or second latches on the central arm is

free from engagement when the plug and socket are releasably retained together (Figs. 14-19e). The disengagement device is on the socket or plug and integral with the socket or plug and operable to displace the central arm when actuated to disengage one or more engagements involving the central arm (Figs. 1-19e). Anscher fails to disclose that the second catch or second latch on an opposing side of the cavity or central arm is sized and positioned with a symmetry to the first catch or first latch. Accordingly, it would not have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to provide the second latch on an opposing side of the central arm is sized and positioned without symmetry to the first latch since the second latch on an opposing side of the central arm is sized and positioned to engage the first catch in a different manner since both engagement structures work differently.

Regarding claim 26, JP '514 discloses a safety buckle (A,B) comprises a first buckle member (A) having a projection (30) with a first engagement part (32a) located thereon and a second buckle member (B) having a cavity for receiving the projection with a second engagement part (75c). The first and second engagement parts are cooperative to retain the first and second buckle members together when the projection is inserted into the cavity in a first orientation (Figs. 1-37). One of the first and second engagement parts (A) have a symmetrically functional counterpart (32a) such that another of the first or second engagement parts cooperates with the counterpart to retain the first and second buckle members together when the projection is inserted into the cavity in a relative orientation different from the first relative orientation (Figs. 6 and 30). The one of the first and second engagement parts are free from engagement (Figs.

6 and 30). A disengagement device (C) is operable to disengage cooperative engagement parts or the counterpart when actuated (Figs. 1-37). JP '514 fails to disclose that the disengagement device is integral with the socket or plug and operable to displace the projection. Although, Galbreath (US 6,138,330) teaches a safety buckle comprises a socket (13) and a plug (10) shaped to be cooperatively joined in a clasped condition (Figs. 1-6 and 14) where a latching mechanism (11a,11b,14a) is included in the socket (Figs. 1-6 and 14) with the latching mechanisms are arranged with functional symmetry to permit the buckle members to be joined and clasped with the latching mechanism in a plurality of orientations (Figs. 1-6 and 14), a blocking device (16c) protrudes from a first surface of a cavity of the socket and is provided between two members (11a,11b) of the latching mechanism to prevent disengagement of the latching mechanism (Figs. 1-6 and 14) and a disengagement device (20) is provided integral with the socket so that the user can pull the blocking device from between the two members (11a,11b) of the latching mechanism in order to allow disengage the latching mechanism (C. 5, L. 23-26 and Figs. 1-6 and 14) and it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have a disengagement device being integral with one or more of the first and second buckle members as taught by Galbreath in the buckle of JP '514 such that the disengagement device is attached to the latching mechanism (75c) disclosed by JP '514, it would not have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have the disengagement device being operable to displace the projection since JP '514 discloses that the buckle is disengaged by displacing the second

engagement part of the second buckle member and fails to discloses that buckle is disengaged by displacing the projection. As for Anscher, once again Anscher fails to disclose that the one of the first or second engagement pars have a symmetrically functional counterpart. Accordingly, it would not have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to provide the one of the first or second engagement pars have a symmetrically functional counterpart since both engagement structures work differently.

For claim 32, JP '514 discloses a safety buckle (A,B) that can be clasped in a plurality of orientations and that comprises a first buckle member (A), a second buckle member (B), a cavity (inside buckle member B) a projection (30), a first engagement structure (75c), a second engagement structure (32a in the upper surface of the central arm), a third engagement structure (32a in the lower surface of the central arm) and a disengagement device (C). The first buckle member and the second buckle member are complementary shaped to fit together with each other in a clasped condition (Figs. 1-37). The cavity is provided in one of the first and second buckle members (Figs. 1-37). The projection is on another of the first and second buckle members (Figs. 1-37). The projection is inserted into the cavity of the one of the first and second buckle members in the clasped condition (Figs. 1-37). The first engagement structure (32a) is on the projection and the second engagement structure (75a) is in the cavity. The first and second engagement structures are sized and positioned to cooperate with each other to retain the first and second buckle members together in the clasped condition in a first orientation (Figs. 1-37). The third engagement structure is located on the projection and

sized and positioned to cooperate with the second engagement structure to retain the first and second buckle members together in the clasped condition in a second orientation different from the first orientation (Figs. 1-37). Another of the first or second engagement structures being free from engagement in the second orientation (Figs. 1-37). The disengagement device (C) is operable to disengage cooperative engagement parts or the counterpart when actuated (Figs. 1-37). JP '514 fails to disclose that the projection further comprises two central arms, one central arm having the first engagement structure and the other central arm having the third engagement structure with the two central arms being symmetrical about an axis lying along an insertion direction of the projection into the cavity and that the disengagement device is integral with the socket or plug and operable to displace the projection. Although, Galbreath (US 6,138,330) teaches a safety buckle comprises a socket (13) and a plug (10) shaped to be cooperatively joined in a clasped condition (Figs. 1-6 and 14) where a latching mechanism (11a,11b,14a) is included in the socket (Figs. 1-6 and 14) with the latching mechanisms are arranged with functional symmetry to permit the buckle members to be joined and clasped with the latching mechanism in a plurality of orientations (Figs. 1-6 and 14), a blocking device (16c) protrudes from a first surface of a cavity of the socket and is provided between two members (11a,11b) of the latching mechanism to prevent disengagement of the latching mechanism (Figs. 1-6 and 14) and a disengagement device (20) is provided integral with the socket so that the user can pull the blocking device from between the two members (11a,11b) of the latching mechanism in order to allow disengage the latching mechanism (C. 5, L. 23-26 and Figs. 1-6 and 14) and it

would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have a disengagement device being integral with one or more of the first and second buckle members as taught by Galbreath in the buckle of JP '514 such that the disengagement device is attached to the latching mechanism (75c) disclosed by JP '514, it would not have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have the projection further comprises two central arms with one central arm having the first engagement structure and the other central arm having the another engagement structure and the disengagement device being operable to displace the projection. JP '514 discloses that the buckle is disengaged by displacing the second engagement part of the second buckle member and fails to disclose that buckle is disengaged by displacing the projection. Regarding to the two central arms, a duplication of part could yield the two central arms but it would not have been obvious that one central arm would have the first engagement structure and the other central arm would have the another engagement structure with the two central arms being symmetrical about an axis lying along an insertion direction of the projection into the cavity. As for Anscher, Anscher fails to disclose that the two central arms are symmetrical about an axis lying along an insertion direction of the projection into the cavity. Accordingly, it would not have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to provide the two central arms being symmetrical about an axis lying along an insertion direction of the projection into the cavity since Anscher discloses that the first and third engagement structures work differently and the engagement structures can not be considered symmetrical.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to RUTH C. RODRIGUEZ whose telephone number is (571) 272-7070. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 07:15 - 15:45.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Victor D. Batson can be reached on (571) 272-6987.

Submissions of your responses by facsimile transmission are encouraged. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-6640.

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